

CLAIMS

1. A process for the preparation of a vanilla extract, which comprises the following steps:
 - 5 a) browning of the beans;
 - b) extraction of the beans followed by treatment with an enzymatic system with cellulase and hemicellulase activities;
 - c) purification of the products to a vanillin-enriched concentrate.
- 10 2. A process as claimed in claim 1, in which the browning of the beans is carried out by means of a cycle of freezing at temperatures ranging from -10 to -30°C and thawing at temperatures ranging from 2° to 8°C.
3. A process as claimed in claim 1, in which the browning of the beans is carried out by means of a cycle of scalding in water at temperatures ranging from 60° to 65°C and subsequent incubation at temperatures ranging from 15°
15 to 45°C.
4. A process as claimed in claim 1, in which the extraction is carried out with hydroethanolic solutions of an alcoholic degree ranging from 20 to 80% v/v, at temperatures ranging from room temperature to 80°C.
5. A process as claimed in claim 4 in which the extraction is carried out
20 with hydroethanolic solutions of an alcoholic degree ranging from 40 to 60% v/v, at temperatures ranging from 60° to 70°C.
6. A process as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 5, in which the enzymatic treatment is carried out by contacting the extract with enzymes having cellulase activity ranging from 2000 to 6000 IU/g.
- 25 7. A process as claimed in claim 6, in which an enzyme with activity ranging from 3000 to 5000 IU/g is used.
8. A process as claimed in claim 7, in which an enzyme with cellulase activity of 4000 IU/g is used.

9. A process as claimed in any one of claims 6 to 8, in which the enzyme is used in concentrations ranging from 0.05 to 0.4% on the fresh bean.
10. A process as claimed in any one of claims 6 to 8, in which the reaction is carried out at temperatures ranging from 25°C to 50°C, for a time ranging
5 from 20 to 72 hours.
11. A process as claimed in any one of the above claims, in which the purification (step b) comprises a series of treatments with water-ethanol solutions of different alcoholic degrees for the depuration of the aqueous soft extract or of a 50% v/v hydroalcoholic solution obtained by ethanol dilution of
10 the enzymatically treated extract, operating at temperatures ranging from room temperature to 50°C.